

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 29 No. 10

October 15, 1961

Whole No. 349



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #26

Beadle's American Library

### BEADLE'S AMERICAN LIBRARY

The most important of the publications of Beadle's short lived English branch. Approximately 6½x4 inches. 61 numbers were issued (1861-1866) in the familiar yellow wrappers from 44 Paternoster Row, London. Then George Routledge & Sons, Broadway, Ludgate Hill, London, continued the series from numbers 62 to 84 (1866-1868), using bright orange wrappers with the title and design in colors. Thus the first "Beadles" to be issued in "illuminated" wrappers were not published by Beadle at all! Many, possibly all, of the Beadle issues were reprinted with the Routledge imprint and distinctive wrapper.

A peculiarity of the first two numbers was the use of a different illustration on the yellow wrapper from that used for the frontispiece. Evidently the experiment was not considered worth the extra cost for, from Number 3, the American parent company's custom of making the two illustrations identical was followed.

The picture on the front of this issue of the rarely seen cover used for Beadle's American Library No. 1, is reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum. Copies of Beadle's American Library with the original wrapper preserved are very hard to find, mainly because of the common practice in England at that time of having six or eight issues bound up together in half-leather, the wrappers being discarded in the process.

### NEWSY NEWS

Ralph F. Cummings  
South Grafton, Mass.

Ed Leithead cracks up the Don Rysel book on "The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill," and so when he does, you know it's good. There's a whole chapter on and about dime novels,

nice illustrations and what not.

Jim Van De Mark says he read the Good News article over and over that came out in last July or August Roundup special. When some articles are interesting, you ust have to read them 3 or 4 times. He also liked Cap. Mayo's article on The Holiday. I guess we all did.

### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 37 John E. Clark, 260 Wade St., Bridgeport 4, Conn. (New address)
- 239 Mrs. Ethel Walbridge, RFD, Cambridge, Vermont (New member)
- 240 Mrs. Irene Gurman, 23498 Parklawn, Oak Park 37, Mich. (New member)
- 241 Darrell C. Richardson, Auburn Baptist Church, Lincoln and Main, Auburn, Ky. (New member)

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## The Alger Fakes

by Ralph Adimari

This concept of what I shall try to prove a fact started in the dim past of New York-New Jersey history. It probably started over who owned Staten Island which while a geographical part of New Jersey is really an integral part of New York City forming one of its five boroughs. This rivalry started sometime after the Revolution or perhaps in the early years of the 19th Century. It may have virtually died in the interim until soon after the Civil War when people from New Jersey started to commute to New York City to work in the offices then opening up, especially in the Wall Street district. The old rivalry soon resumed again. To the New Jersey men and women the people of New York City and environs were only "Yorkers," a term of contempt to show that only "mokes" could live in a big gangling city. In answer the "Yorker" beginning to feel the sting of invading mosquitos from the vast swamps of New Jersey over the Palisades as well as the Jerseyites themselves, began to call all people from New Jersey, Skeeters. This was a corruption of the word Mosquitos. New Yorkers felt both humans and insects were nuisances and that they should both stay in Jersey and not come over the Hudson River to bother them. It is my opinion having been mixed up in this rivalry in the closing phases of World War I that the Skeeters were really the fiercer of the two. New Yorkers were inclined to take the rivalry with a kind of amiable nonchalance, but not so the Jerseyite. During World War I, I worked for a Custom House concern which sent me to all parts of the Metropolitan area and I found the Skeeters more hostile in their attitude toward me. This I didn't understand until later in life. Even my boss who was from Rutherford, N. J. seems to me (now) to have had this same attitude while I believe that most of the others from New York were friendlier. In those war days, 1917-18 and subsequent days

in the peace year of 1919, I remember having a slight dread in going to any part of Jersey, something I could not say about any other part of the area.

All this is a preliminary to what I want to prove. The newly formed publishing firm of Cupples & Leon in New York City published two books by Horatio Alger, Jr. One was Joe, the Hotel Boy; or, Winning Out by Pluck issued in 1906, the other Ben Logan's Triumph; or, The Boys of Boxwood Academy issued in 1908. These two books, as well as another Alger book, Randy of the River published about 1906 to 1908 and issued by Grosset & Dunlap, I read during the years 1917-20. These 3 were part of a hundred or more books I read then by Alger.

After having read most of Alger's books published during his lifetime I came across these three books. But I was impressed even then that there was such lively writing about them that I wondered why. But no answer came to me. I had even a vague recollection that some of the stories alleged by him after his death also were different from the early Alger's.

Last year I purchased a copy of Ben Logan's Triumph and was struck after reading it by the fact that it could not possibly have been written by Alger. For one thing it was too lively for Alger, too bouncy and even suggested a 20th century viewpoint in the sub-title, The Boys of Boxwood Academy (in the zero years of the 20th century school stories began to have a high selling power). If you'll look up a list of Alger's early titles you won't find a single mention of schools.

More important is the fact that the story of Ben Logan is about a New York street boy who struggles along to make his living but he is not above cheating in a little sly way in making a nickel or dime here and there. This is a deviation from the old Alger formula which chained the



hero to be a boy beyond dishonesty in any manner or form. A scrupulous boy who loved his mother dear. In the very early books Alger had made his boy heroes a little more human but as the 80's and 90's rushed by his books took on a holier than thou attitude but the strange interest that always was in his stories persisted. Boy readers were thus fascinated. This very enchantment is missing in Ben Logan.

Another important fact is that in the due course of the story Ben Logan meets up with a tall dark farmer from New Jersey who has been swindled out of some money while in New York City. The author of Ben Logan implies that all "Yorkers" are swindlers and disparages the great city to the advantages of living in New Jersey. The farmer persuades Ben Logan to go to his farm to become a success after going thru school. Alger never cast any slurs upon New York so far as I can remember. He loved New York as no man did to my knowledge.

While still in Harvard about 1854, Alger went to New York City and fell in love with that great city and his love and devotion grew with the years. It became to him his first home after he left Boston for good and here all his dreams came true. To Alger the New York street boy or "Arab" as he was called by the intellectuals, was a noble hero without evil in his makeup, without blemish in his character. Even before the Civil War had started, Alger already demeaned himself to the New York street boy. In a description of the boy Alger looked upon him as some guileless wide eyed honest whole souled youth in strong contrast to the young wrongdoer, cynical and worldly wise (Alger describing Alger pre Civil War) whose heart was overwhelmed by the boy's total absence of wickedness which in the end reforms Alger the wrongdoer. Thus it becomes evident why the real Alger fell in love with the city and it became his passion.

If Alger had written Ben Logan's Triumph he could have had his hero

go to school in the various schools in New York City. Neither would he have let Ben come back to New York to urge several other people to leave New York and come to Jersey because the city was unhealthy for them. This implies that New Jersey was a better place for people to live in, that New York was unworthy.

Upon the evidence given it seems apparent that a Jerseyite (Skeeter) wrote Ben Logan's Triumph. Another fact that gave the whole thing away was that when Cupples & Leon published the two Alger books, no fanfare was made, no statements were forthcoming about how they got these new Algers some 7 and 9 years after his death in 1899. In the announcements they merely give a resume of each story. This was done obviously to avoid embarrassing questions. To put this ruse over on the juvenile public the more quietly it was announced the better. The boys themselves would magnify the sequel. For in the back of Ben Logan's Triumph are advertisements of all the books published by Cupples & Leon and all of them with two exceptions are the known pseudonyms of Edward C. Stratemeyer namely, Arthur M. Winfield, Capt. Ralph Bonehill, Roy Rockwood, Allen Chapman. The girl series by Margaret Penrose who could also be Stratemeyer, was published to attract girl readers to C. & L. But the only true author was Horatio Alger, Jr., who was undoubtedly Stratemeyer himself. Stratemeyer was not only a Jerseyite but he was born and bred there and commuted to New York as early as the 90's to about 1928.

Sometime about the year that Cupples & Leon came into existence circa 1906, Stratemeyer formed his famous Stratemeyer Syndicate which carried such well known juvenile writers as St. George Rathborne, Howard R. Garis and his sister Lillian C. Garis. These three authors also lived in New Jersey at one time or another so that each one could have written the two Alger C. & L. titles but my opinion upon discovering the fake in Ben Logan was first of all Stratemeyer,



and I stick to the first impression. And I assert that Stratemeyer also wrote Joe, the Hotel Boy and Randy of the River, a Grosset & Dunlap 1906-08 publication even tho I have not read these titles since youthhood some 40 years ago. Randy of the River is a title that is not Algerish at all. Alger titles were prosaic, not flamboyant or sensational.

My discovery was itself sensational and I offered my suspicions to Mr. Roy B. Van Devier of Akron, Ohio, who is a Stratemeyer expert and he promptly replied: Letter dated Feb. 28, 1961.

"I have always thought that Stratemeyer wrote these 11 books that he claimed that Alger left unfinished.

I don't think that Alger left any of those books unfinished. They are all Stratemeyer's and not Alger's."

I'm inclined to believe myself that all other eight novels "completed" by Stratemeyer were in fact all Stratemeyer. But here we get into deep waters because those acknowledged to be part Alger and part Stratemeyer cannot be judged without absolute evidence. We can say Ben Logan by Alger is a fake but we cannot say that Nelson, the Newsboy by Alger and completed by Stratemeyer is a fake. It could be but there is one fact to bring up. Several Oliver Optic titles begun by Optic were completed by Stratemeyer after the former's death in 1897. It would be a little too far fetched to claim these also were fakes without total proof. Another fact that makes me suspicious is that Young Captain Jack begun by Alger and completed by Stratemeyer is not a title that Alger would have chosen since it is a war title. Alger had an aversion for war since he loved young men and they (in those days) were its victims. If Young Captain Jack is about the Spanish American War then we can discard it as a true Alger story. Stratemeyer wrote a number of Spanish American War stories so this Alger title would come easy for him to write and name.

A writer like Stratemeyer with his

syndicate must have thought of himself as a boss man (a la Western style) and tried to make over Alger in his image. He therefore also used in the Cupples & Leon lists many rags to riches stories under another of his popular pseudonyms, Allen Chapman. This gave the house of Cupples & Leon a true Algerish aura. This seems to have succeeded since Alger had reached the zenith of his popularity 1900-1910.

While I was a clerk in the famous downtown Lincoln book store circa 1920-25, Alger was the most popular author among the juvenile readers. He even outsold for a time the sports writers and the science-fiction authors. Alger outsold Optic by 10 to 1, he outsold G. A. Henty, famous English writer of war stories, 20 to 1, Harry Castleman, 20 to 1, Edward S. Ellis, 5 to 1, but his margin over Stratemeyer-Winfield-Bonehill was only about 3 to 2. I was informed by Rover Boy devotees that Stratemeyer outsold Alger 2 to 1 in swank book shops.

In using the Alger stories, Stratemeyer and Co. had a perfect setup. Unfortunately the fantastic popularity of the Motion Pictures cast a shadow on the idea and the scheme never got far. If it had not been for that Stratemeyer would have succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. The type of book being then written by Stratemeyer, 1905-25, Rover Boys, Baseball Joe, Putnam Hall School Series, Dave Porter, Outdoor Series, Tom Swift and Motor Boys. But the movies were taking their toll so that by 1930 when Stratemeyer died his books were selling fewer and fewer. Even the favorite Frank Merriwell gave up some four years later, 1934.

To get back to Alger, his love for New York City was one of the famous historical facts of American life. He so loved the city that not a whisper of doubt ever was noted by anyone about him. Ben Logan's Triumph is not from his pen if not only for the reasons given above but that he would find any other place for his hero to mature to success especially



a New York boy.

For a further study of Horatio Alger, Jr., see the Stanley A. Pachon archives in Bethlehem, Pa.

For a further study of Edward Stratemeyer see Round Up, Feb. and March 1938. (Edward Stratemeyer by Roy B. Van Devier). The House of Beadle & Adams, by Albert Johannsen, Vol. 2.

(Besides the Horatio Alger, Jr., stories allegedly completed by Stratemeyer, the Oliver Optic stories also completed by Stratemeyer must be studied book by book to see if they really were part Optic or Alger and part Stratemeyer or wholly Stratemeyer. Another important point is that Stratemeyer used his own name for Alger while he used his pseudonym Arthur M. Winfield for the completed Optic tales. I'm not sure tho about the nom. It may have been for Alger, but see the Panchon archives for it. Why the use of his nom de plume, why not his own name?)

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Editor, Edward T. LeBlanc,

87 School St., Fall River, Mass.

Managing Editor, Edward T. LeBlanc,

87 School St., Fall River, Mass.

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